

Does the Spirit Still Give the Gifts of Prophecy, Tongues, and Healings?

A Case for Cessationism

I. Are all the gifts still given today?

- A. **Cessationism** is the view that the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and healings/miracles were given only during the apostolic time, prior to the completion of the New Testament writings.
- B. **Continuationism** is the view that all the gifts are still given to the church today.
- C. **“We teach** that sign gifts (apostle, prophet, healing, miracles, and tongues) authenticated the ministry and message of the apostles (Ephesians 2:20; Hebrews 2:1-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12) and served in the establishment of the church (Acts 2:41-47; 9:31-42). We teach that God continues to demonstrate His miraculous power and ability to heal; but the sign gifts, as given to the early church, are not in effect today” (GCOT, “What We Teach”).

II. A Closer Look at Prophecy, Tongues, and Healing

A. Prophecy

- 1. **Definition:** Prophecy is when a person spontaneously receives a revelation from God to communicate to other people and does so without error (1 Cor. 14:29-30, Acts 13:1-2, OT prophets).
- 2. Is prophecy mixed with error? This is a key question.
 - a. In the OT it was not (Deut. 18:20-22, 1 Sam 3:19-20).
 - b. In the NT it is not (Matt 7:15, 1 John 4:1, Acts 2:17 quoting Joel 2 would have OT idea).
 - c. If the true prophets could give words of truth mixed with falsehood while prophesying, how would we heed the warnings to be aware of false prophets?

B. Tongues/Interpretation of Tongues

- 1. **Definition:** When a person is enabled to speak a human language that he or she did not learn and does not know in order to tell the mighty works of God to those of different languages (Acts 2:1-11).
- 2. Does 1 Corinthians 14 refer to some heavenly language or ecstatic speech that is not a language?
 - a. No, the gift hasn’t changed from Acts 2.
 - b. See especially 1 Cor. 14:6-11

C. Miracles/Healing

- 1. **Definition:** Healing is the regular ability to enact miraculous and obvious healings of physical ailments by touch or word (Acts 3:1-10). Miracles is the ability to cast out demons or perform miracles related to natural laws.
- 2. Are these gifts an occasional thing? Are they the gift of effectual prayer?
 - a. It seems difficult to speak in a meaningful sense of a “gift of healing” if the person doesn’t have the ability to heal with some regularity.¹

“If the signs and wonders of the apostles have returned, we should see the blind receiving their sight, the lame walking, and the dead being raised. God heals today (sometimes dramatically), but the healing of colds, the flu, TMJ, stomach, and back problems, and so forth aren’t in the same category as the healings found in the Scriptures. If people truly have the

¹ Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts*, 22.

gift of healing and miracles today, they need to demonstrate such by performing the kinds of healings and miracles found in the Bible.”²

III. A Case for Cessationism

A. First, the roles of Apostle and Prophet were foundational roles.

1. Once the foundation is laid, we no longer need or have Apostles or Prophets (Ephesians 2:19-21, 1 Cor. 15:7, Hebrews 2:1-4).

B. Second, the charismatic gifts that we see today do not line up with the gifts as described in the Bible.

1. If you say you have the gift, then it must be the gift. You can't redefine it and then claim you have it.
2. I can't say, "I'm a millionaire" in a credible way by simply redefining what "millionaire" means.

C. Third, even in the Bible, we see limited appearances of miraculous gifts.

1. In the OT, at the Exodus and at the time of Elijah and Elisha.
2. In the NT, we see a lot during the ministry of Jesus. Why? The King has come.
3. As the timeline in the NT epistles progresses, we see less of these gifts, even in the ministry of Paul (ex. We see him, in Acts 20, bringing a young man from the dead. In 2 Tim. 4:20, his last letter, we see he did not heal a co-laborer who was ill).

IV. Concluding Questions

A. Does being a cessationist mean we miss out on something God has for us or are "anti-Spirit"?

1. Only if you beg the question by assuming the Spirit thinks we still need these gifts and gives them.

B. Does being a cessationist mean we don't think God does miracles and healings?

1. No, we pray for him to heal and work miracles, and we believe he does.
2. We just believe he doesn't give those gifts to the church.

C. How should we engage continuationist friends and family (or you)?

1. We don't need to assume evil motives of friends (but we realize there are false teachers who do have such motives and must be condemned).
2. However, we reject any claims to new revelation because that claim has significant ramifications – it undermines the authority of Scripture.
3. We can gently ask questions about why gifts like prophecy, tongues, and miracles/healings don't seem to look like they did in the NT when they were clearly given.

² [Thomas Schreiner https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/cessationist/](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/cessationist/)